

...NWS Damage Survey finds EF1 Tornado in Laguna Heights with Estimated Winds of 85 to 105 mph...
...One Person Killed and Eleven Others Injured...

Overview: A rapidly-developing mini-supercell formed ahead of an approaching squall line near the Lower Texas coast just before 4 AM Saturday, May 13. The supercell spawned a quick spin-up tornado that struck the town of Laguna Heights, Texas, over a two-minute period before the circulation moved over Laguna Madre Bay and rapidly dissipated. The tornado tracked to the east northeast after the circulation was impacted by the approaching squall line, creating a boomerang effect since the original motion of the radar couplet was to the north-northwest prior to touchdown. Winds may have reached 110 mph, the top of the EF1 scale, in a few locations – but the very poor quality of construction suggests 105 mph is a better estimate.

Tornado #1...

Rating: EF-1
Estimated Peak Wind: 85 to 105 mph
Path Length /statute/: 0.43 miles
Path Width /maximum/: 200 yards
Fatalities: 1
Injuries: 11

Start Date: May 13 2023
Start Time: 406 AM CDT
Start Location: Laguna Heights TX
Start Lat/Lon: 26.08 / -97.26

End Date: May 13 2023
End Time: 408 AM CDT
End Location: Laguna Heights TX
End Lat/Lon: 26.082 / -97.256

Survey Summary: The strongest portion of the tornado, rated EF1, flattened at least six poorly built mobile home structures, removed part of the second story of a local business, and removed the majority of roof decking on at least ten other residences and buildings. At least a half dozen ash and mesquite trees were snapped or uprooted and two wooden power poles were bent.

Casualties were found in several of the demolished mobile homes. A man in his forties was killed when the home collapsed on him. Five others were injured in the same cluster of damaged homes, and two more were injured in a flattened mobile home near the shoreline of Laguna Madre Bay. Two of the injuries, in the home along the bayfront, required extended hospitalizations. Thirty-eight additional residents were displaced by the tornado and were housed at the local events center with American Red Cross assistance, through the afternoon of May 13.

In all, there was the one fatality and eleven injuries, of which two were critical head injuries with the souls remaining in the hospital through the afternoon.

Surrounding the EF1 area, portions of roofs and shingles were removed from residences, large limbs were broken, and fences were knocked down.

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EF Scale: The Enhanced Fujita Scale classifies tornadoes into the following categories:

EF0...Weak.....65 to 85 mph
EF1...Weak.....86 to 110 mph
EF2...Strong....111 to 135 mph

EF3...Strong....136 to 165 mph

EF4...Violent...166 to 200 mph

EF5...Violent...>200 mph

NOTE:

The information in this statement is preliminary and subject to change pending final review of the event and publication in NWS Storm Data.

For specific surveyed locations on a map, as well as dozens of photos and site-specific wind ratings, can be found at <https://apps.dat.noaa.gov/StormDamage/DamageViewer/>. When on this page, zoom all the way into the southern tip of Texas near the Port Isabel area. Then, change the dates in the upper right corner to “begin date” of 5/12/2023 and “end date” of 5/13/2023.
